



1 Nov 22 - 30 Sept 23

FINAL REPORT

WHAT DID WE DO?

The aim of this project was to improve access and confidence in the Scottish hills for people who are currently under-represented in the outdoor industry. We identified two communities which normally face financial and/or social exclusion from outdoor activity; refugee/asylum seekers and the LGBTQI+ community. We conducted research and developed resources in conjunction with these communities which specifically addressed the top barriers to hiking for community members. We created a series of infocards called 'How 2 the Hills', together with the excluded communities and outdoor authorities (including Mountaineering Scotland) which aimed to improve knowledge and confidence for new hikers. We trialled the infocards through a summer hiking series. We went on four hikes with each team, going to locations which are accessible by public transport from Glasgow. Each hike was more challenging than the last as we developed confidence, fitness and skills in the outdoors. We created visual route cards for each hike, which can be downloaded digitally.

During the hikes, we delivered workshops based on the infocard content, led by industry experts where appropriate. We then documented these workshops online via a series of video workshops which are available on YouTube. We evaluated these resources via surveys and focus groups during and after the hiking series.

WHERE DID WE GO?

Across both groups, we climbed the following hills:

- Conic Hill, The Trossachs
- Dumgoyne, Campsie Fells,
- The Slacks, Kilpatrick Hills
- Beinn Dubh, Luss Hills



Summit of Beinn Dubh, Summer 2023

WHO TOOK PART?

A total of **37** people normally financially excluded from outdoor activity participated in the summer hiking programme. Twenty-two people were members of the men's group at the Maryhill Integration Network (MIN), who are in the process of, or have recently been able to claim asylum in the UK. The other fifteen people were members of LEAP Sports Scotland's TransActive group, which offers a range of free sports and physical activity groups for people who are transgender or who have a transgender history.

We aimed to have the same 10 participants attend each hike, but due to high demand and people's availability in the summer, we had mixed numbers across the hiking days, ranging from 5 to 15 participants, with the majority of participants attending 3 or more hikes. This allowed participants to build their skills, fitness and confidence in the hills towards the goal of summiting Beinn Dubh, at 642m high.

All participants were adults, representing a diversity of gender identities, ethnicities, cultures, religions and life stories. Together with the partner organisations we aimed to address all needs and to ensure everyone felt safe and empowered in the hills.

MIN		27 men (incl trans men)
		3 women (incl trans women)
LEAP		7 non-binary participants

WHAT DID WE DO?

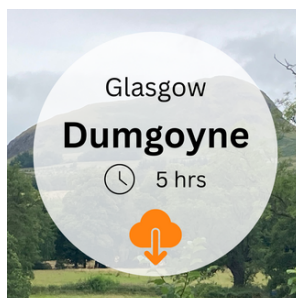
1 Researched the Barriers

- 2 x intro walks to discuss barriers to hiking/the outdoors
- 15 x survey responses to identify the 5 most useful infocard topics to make hiking easier to do

[Click here for a summary of research into barriers](#)

2 Created 5 Infocards & 4 Route Itineraries

- Consulted with industry experts, including Mountaineering Scotland and LEAP Sports Scotland, to create infocard content
- Researched 4 hikes, with gradually increasing difficulty and accessible by public transport from Glasgow
- Worked with a graphic designer to create accessible infocards for social media as well as a digital and print guidebook with more detailed information, as well as 4 x route itineraries.
- [Click here to see the resources.](#)



3 Delivered Series of Hikes

- We ran 4 x hikes with each organisation through June, July and August to trial the resources
- Each hike featured a workshop based on an infocard topic(s)
- Participants were provided with lunch and transport tickets by Mhor Outdoor, and any equipment (E.g. waterproofs, hiking poles etc) they needed.



4 Filmed Video Workshops

- 5 x video workshops based on the infocard content were created and uploaded to YouTube so that people who were not participants in the project can access the workshops



5 Evaluated the Project

- 26 x survey responses to evaluate the resources and hiking series
- 1 x project partners evaluation meeting

WHAT IMPACT DID IT HAVE?



"The project helped me become confident in completing challenging walks, reminded me that there is no rush to reach a destination, allowed me to make new friends"

Hikers were equipped with the confidence, knowledge and skills to enjoy hiking in the Scottish outdoors after this project ended. Hikers talked about the importance of building social connections and getting outside with others who are 'like them', to help them to continue hiking.

The **organisations** involved recognise the value that hiking has on developing self-confidence and social skills, as well as improving mental and physical wellbeing. The organisations now plan to incorporate walking and hiking into their year-round work.

By involving **industry experts** in this project, we have raised awareness of the barriers faced by under-represented communities, such as trans people, in getting outdoors. This should lead to further funding and initiatives to promote inclusion.

All hikers reported that as a result of the project, they feel **more confident in their hiking skills**. Ninety-four percent of hikers said they have **made friends through the project**, and 70% said they have already (or plan to) **go hiking with these friends** outside of the project.

All hikers said they would **recommend the How 2 the Hills resources** to a friend who is looking to start hiking. Eighty-nine percent of hikers agreed or strongly agreed that **the guidebook helps them to feel more confident about planning a day in the hills**.



"This was a super project. Really valued you giving this resource to help transgender and non-binary people get on the hills. Great to go in numbers for support."


"Emily was super supportive and there to help when needed. I really appreciated both Emily and Mat's wee chats on the bus or on the walk itself."

"Very happy to have the opportunity to participate in this projects, especially learning about the benefits of hiking."

"I was hesitant to attend hike 2 as the forecast was not so good, rain etc. In the end I am so pleased I took part. Showed me that I can survive wet conditions and stay dry!!"

"Lovely to chat with new folk. Gave me a great boost. It was the first time I'd left my house alone in the day time as myself"



[Click here for an article by project participant, Oliver](#) 



Click above to watch Sam (hike participant) telling us about his experience of the hiking series

WHAT IMPACT DID IT HAVE?

Hikers liked the **visual nature** of the How 2 the Hills resources, which helped to **address language barriers**. They liked the **clear explanations** of topics and the inclusion of **checklists** for what to pack for a day of hillwalking.

There was a preference for a **digital format** of resources, and said that it would be more helpful to have a **workshop ahead of the hike** to allow them to prepare for the day.

Topics which hikers said they would like to learn more about include: **first aid**, going to the **toilet if you're tucking**, more **dietary** information and how much **water** to bring and how to deal with **pre-existing joint conditions** in the hills.



Click above to hear about Param's (hike participant) experiences on the project

CONFIDENCE & KNOWLEDGE IN HIKING SKILLS

100%

Participants say they feel 'a little' or 'very confident' in their hiking skills after the project

82%

Said the hiking series gave them 'a lot' more confidence to go outdoors by themselves or with friends/family

x 2

Increase in participants reporting they feel 'very' confident to organise their own hike after the project

Source: Mhor Outdoor Surveys

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING IMPACTS

20%

Increase in average wellbeing score post vs pre-hikes

82%

Said the hiking series improved their physical health 'a lot'

77%

Said the hiking series improved their mental health 'a lot'

Source: Mhor Outdoor Surveys

SOCIAL IMPACTS & ACCESSIBILITY

94%

Said they have made friends through the hiking series

70%

Said they have (or plan to) meet up with these friends outside of the project

HOWEVER...

47%

Said they don't have access to the necessary outdoor clothing and equipment for hillwalking

Source: Mhor Outdoor Surveys

HOW 2 THE HILLS GUIDEBOOK

100%

Participants would recommend the guidebook to a friend is looking to start hiking

89%

Agreed or strongly agreed that the guidebook helps them to feel more confident about planning a day in the hills

- ✓ Visual nature & accessible language
- ✓ Clear explanation of topics
- ✓ Checklist for what to pack

- ? More info on toileting if tucking
- ? First aid info
- ? More info on what to eat, how much to drink, pre-existing joint pain, benefits of poles.

Source: Mhor Outdoor Surveys

WHAT PLANS CHANGED

During the planning stages of the project, in discussion with project partners, we decided to film the video workshops whilst out on the hikes so that participants would feature and encourage more representation in the outdoors. However, participants were not as willing as expected to take part in the video creation, and so the videos were made retrospectively by the project coordinator, Emily.

Less budget was spent on transport and mountain assistance, and more budget was required for sustenance and map printing than originally foreseen, perhaps due to rises in costs in line with the cost-of-living crisis since the budget was forecast.



Ross from Mountaineering Scotland leads a navigation skills workshop with the LEAP Sports group



Project Coordinator, Emily, leads a workshop on planning your days in the hills



A well-earned rest at Luss Pier on hike 4

WHO SUPPORTED THE PROJECT?

Funding for the project was provided by the **National Lottery Community Fund**. The primary delivery partners in the project were the **Maryhill Integration Network (MIN)** and **LEAP Sports Scotland (LEAP)** who identified the new hikers who would most benefit from the project. The delivery partners advised during planning and delivery to ensure all barriers were being addressed and that the experiences were as empowering as possible.

Mountaineering Scotland came onboard as a project partner, providing expert advice on infocard content, sharing resources across their social media channels, and having their staff join us on some hikes to deliver specialist sessions, including navigation and planning skills.



WHAT WERE THE MAIN CHALLENGES AND LEARNINGS?

The project was a great opportunity to understand how an introductory hiking series, teamed with infocards and workshops, can equip members of under-represented communities with the knowledge, confidence and skills to enjoy the Scottish hills.

Some of the strengths of this project were that all of the organisation, including lunches, transport, kit, and having a detailed itinerary ahead of the hike took much of the anxiety of planning away for participants. It was also great to have a regular group of participants across the series as it means that people could build lasting connections, which hopefully transcend this project. Project partners report major boosts in confidence among the participants, not just in their hiking skills but in other areas of their lives, indicating the powerful and holistic impact that outdoor skills can provide. This project also involved the creation of resources which address and raise awareness of gender dysphoria in the outdoors, a topic on which there is a severe lack of guidance.

Some of the challenges included having to turn away potential participants to the MIN hikes as the spaces were filled quickly and hit capacity. This is an encouraging indication that people in the refugee/asylum seeker community are keen to learn about and enjoy the Scottish outdoors, and that more funding is required to accommodate this need. Delivery of the workshops during the hikes was another challenge, and in the future it would be best to more formally structure this into the day, and bring in a third party 'expert' to assist in the delivery.

Finally, due to the relatively short intervention of the project alongside the nature of the impacts we are aiming to create, it is difficult to secure much quantitative data on the impact of the project. However, surveys of barriers and experiences, alongside focus group discussions and feedback to partners were very useful for monitoring the impact of the project.



Important post-hike stretches while we wait for the bus home



Always time to stop for fun on the way up, in the Kilpatrick Hills



A wee sunbathe on our way down Beinn Dubh, after heavy rain!



Enjoying our packed lunches in the Kilpatrick Hills

WHAT'S NEXT?

To wrap up the project, Mhor Outdoor will support Mat and Ismail (the key contacts at LEAP and MIN, respectively) to engage in further training which will allow them to lead hikes with members of their organisations, without the necessity of Mhor Outdoor to ensure the long-term sustainability of this work.

Ismail, who is in his final year of studying Community Education at the University of Glasgow, has chosen to do his dissertation project on the mental health benefits of hiking for the refugee/asylum seeker community. He plans to use the data and resources from this project in his work. Ismail has offered MIN's services free of charge to translate the How 2 the Hills resources into multiple languages, ensuring we continue to dismantle barriers to hiking for marginalised communities.

The feedback from both partner organisations has been extremely positive, and they have spoken of the immense benefit this activity can offer their members who have gained new experiences, but also perspectives that can help them during difficult times in the future.

Mhor Outdoor will continue to grow as an organisation and aim to diversify funding in order to reach as many people as possible who are currently excluded from being active outdoors. We are continuing to build and develop partnerships with the outdoor industry on projects which empower marginalised communities to get outside more. This will further our goal of improving access to the hills and outdoor lifestyles, for a healthier, happier and more equitable Scotland.



A HUGE THANKS TO ALL PARTNERS THAT CAME ON THIS ADVENTURE

